Fellowship in Prayer

"For a world united in prayer"

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.

— *Whittier.*

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OUR PURPOSE

"To promote the practice of prayer among *all* religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God, regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind."

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

22 E. 29th Street New York 16, N.Y.

Volume June, 1959 Number 3

THE TRUST

Strong Lover, whose belief in Man
Brings forth in him the answering faith,
My weak response in pity scan,
The poor half-love that poorly prayeth;
Whene'er my trust declines from Thee,
Do thou the more believe in me.

We find thee on the water still,
Thou bidst the ocean's anger cease,
Much more within the human will
For storm and stress thou bringest peace;
Lord, when I balk at thy control,
Tighten thy reins about my soul.

When in the night I toss and turn,
And fears seem mammoth, help far-off,
And comfortless I only yearn
Childlike, to be consoled by love;
Even so, great Spirit, in that hour
Cradle my heart in thy sure power.

And when my days on earth are told,
When I am weak as any child,
When light is failing, limbs a-cold,
And mind, may be, obscure or wild,
Let me retain one vision: Thee.
Almighty Love, take over me.

— A. E. Johnson.

PRAYER: ITS OWN REWARD

There are many who have not yet discovered what prayer in its essence is, who still look for tangible results of prayer in the world of action and possessions. But there are others for whom has been born the tremendous and hard-won truth that prayer is a means to nothing, that it is an end in itself, and is itself its own reward. How could it be otherwise? In deep prayer we commune in speechless love, and wonder, in a silence more profound than the silence of great deserts, with the Power that created us. Is there anything beyond this that we could hope to gain from the act of prayer?

Who or what is it that prays? A body? A mind? An ego? An entity separate from the Power it prays to? Many people in all ages have prayed as if these things were true, and with such an attitude it was logical to pray for *things*, for the satisfaction of desires. Or is it a soul that prays? A living and divine spirit evolving through time and the manifestations of matter an eternal destiny? An individuality joined to the Power it addresses, one with that Power in a literal sense, absolutely and forever united with it? We believe all this to be true, and there are some who already *know* it to be true. If it is, why should we weep? Why should we desire anything? Why should we pray for anything whatever, when we have everything already?

Ideally, we are told, by the masters of prayer of all religions, that we should pray for the purification of our minds so that we may understand our own natures. Through prayer and meditation, they tell us, our minds will become gradually pure, our true nature will unfold itself to us, and ultimately we will all know who we are, and why we have lived. Only prayer and meditation, and divine grace, nothing else, can bestow upon a man this supreme knowledge.

Prayer is our major weapon in the drama of the soul to transform itself into what it believes. Perhaps this is the only real drama there is, since all others are lived out more or less unconsciously by the participants: dramas in which the players do not grasp the significance of *what is happening to them.* The soul's struggle to realize its own divinity is the only drama enacted consciously by the individual and as such stands alone—sublime and unutterable.

In this drama prayer and meditation will give us the insight we need into our inner essence, and the power to control our senses for living in a sense-imprisoned world; the power also to reduce and attenuate our egos, our desires, and our clinging to a level of life which, when we think about it, is tragic and unbelievable. Prayer and meditation will lead us back to the perfection which is already ours, already our own natures, though we have forgotten it.

There are many who shrink from the prospect of attaining perfection, or of seeking it at all. The most dangerous stage of our development is where we have made a certain amount of spiritual progress: the mysteries of scripture unfold themselves; our faith is stronger, usually, than any challenge the world can throw against it; purity attracts us more and more, in a way we cannot fathom. We look around us and cannot help but compare ourselves to others, and we feel that we have approached more closely than most to the ideal laid down, presumably, for every man by all the great Masters of the earth. The danger is that we will now insist that perfection itself is not required, that divine enlightenment is only for a few—they are, we feel, not absolutely necessary. After all, we are limited beings. We are born, we die, we suffer, there is so much that confuses us. How can such frail reeds be expected to reach perfection, or to seek after it?

But we must. We must try to. All the higher prophets have endlessly told us so. Equally powerful is the urge from within that impels us toward this perfection, as well as the inexorable logic of it. And it is prayer and meditation that will give us the power to conquer our senses, which keep us in the realm of the imperfect and the limited, the land of darkness and death; and they alone can give us the strength and incentive to move forward to the uplands of spiritual illumination where, one day, we will stand beholding the country where there is no night.

We are still weak and deluded in so many ways. But the idea will sink in, and ideas alone are the things that change us. This idea, grasped in part, ardently believed in, and dwelled on as much as possible, will change the character of our prayers and will start a process of spiritual growth whose conclusion can be—and sooner or later, will be—divine illumination for every one of us. «««»»

THE BIRTHDAY OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

By Rabbi Myron B. Movsky

On June 12th and 13th, Jewish people throughout the world will observe the anniversary of the Ten Commandments. Has anyone ever considered what this world would be like without these commandments? Here are the basic regulations for successful and effective living in any society.

In Hebrew the holiday is known as Shevuoth or "Feast of Weeks." It takes its name from its date of celebration, exactly seven weeks after the second day of Passover. This festival is also known as Pentecost, which in Greek means "fiftieth day." It is celebrated on the fiftieth day counting from the second day of Passover.

Shevuoth was the second of the three great pilgrim feasts, when the people of ancient Palestine, from far and near, travelled with their families in gala procession to the Holy City near the Temple of God.

There are many meaningful narratives concerning the giving of the Commandments at Sinai.

Before God gave the Law to Israel, He had offered it to every tribe and nation on the earth, so that thereafter they might not excuse themselves by saying: "Had the Holy One, blessed be He, offered to give the Law to us, we should have accepted it." He had thus gone to the Edomites, the children of Esau, and said: "Will you accept the Torah?"

"What is written in your Torah?" the Edomites had asked.

"One of the commandments of the Torah is: 'Thou shalt not kill,'" replied the Almighty.

They said: "Almighty God, dost Thou desire to deprive us of the blessing which was given to our forefather Esau by his father Isaac? For he was blessed by him with the words: 'And by thy sword shalt thou live.' We dare not give up our blessing and accept Thy Torah."

Thereupon the Almighty had gone to the children of Ishmael and said: "Will you accept My Torah?"

"Acquaint us with what is written in Thy Torah," said the sons of Ishmael.

"The Almighty replied: 'Thou shalt not steal,' is one of the commandments."

"We can not accept Thy Torah," stated the sons of Ishmael, "because our ancestor was blessed thus: 'His hand will be against every

man.' We therefore dare not give up our blessing."

The Almighty then went to all the other nations of the earth and offered them the Torah, but they refused it, because its commandments were contrary to their own beliefs and customs. Finally, He went to the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and asked of them: "Will you accept My Torah?"

"What is written in Thy Torah?" inquired the children of Israel.

"The Torah I desire to give you contains six hundred and thirteen commandments," said the Almighty.

The children of Israel made no further inquiry, but all answered together: "All that the Lord has spoken we will do."

On learning that the Almighty would deliver the Torah to the children of Israel from a mountaintop, the mountains fought among themselves for the honor of being chosen as the spot upon which the glory of God would reveal itself. One mountain said: "Upon me shall the Holy One give His Torah to Israel." Another mountain contended: "Nay, but upon me shall the Holy One give the Torah to Israel."

"Upon me shall God descend," said the lofty Mount Tabor to Mount Hermon, "because I am the highest of all mountains, and when in the days of Noah the flood covered all the elevated places, I alone towered above the water."

"Nay, upon me shall God descend," replied Mount Hermon, "because when the children of Israel wished to cross the Red Sea, I placed myself between the two shores, and enabled them to cross on dry land."

Mount Carmel claimed: "I alone deserve to receive the Divine Presence, because on me in after days Elijah will make the name of God great in the eyes of the world."

Mount Sinai, which was the lowest of the mountains, never ventured to make a claim to glory. Thereupon a voice from the high heavens rang out: "In vain do you quarrel; the Divine Presence shall not descend upon any of the high mountains, who are so proud, and upon whom the heathens erect sanctuaries to their idols. I prefer Mount Sinai, the most humble of all, upon which no sanctuaries have been built by idolaters."

The Lord said to Moses: "Lo, I come to thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever. Go to the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them

wash their garments, and be ready the third day; for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai...."

Moses went down from the mount to the people, and sanctified them; and they washed their garments. It came to pass on the morning of the third day, that there were thunder and lightning and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the sound of a horn exceedingly loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled.

Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the foot of the mount. Now Mount Sinai was altogether covered in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the entire mount quaked greatly. When the horn sounded louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice. The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai; the Lord called Moses to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. The Lord said: "Go down, and thou shalt reascend with Aaron; but let not the priests and the people come, lest the Lord smite them."

At noon the Israelites brought their wives and children to the mount, the men assembling in one division and the women in another. The Almighty then revealed Himself before the people. He lifted up the mountain, and holding it like a basket over the heads of the people He said to them: "If you will accept the Torah, it shall be well with you; otherwise you shall all find your graves under the mountain." They all burst into tears, and again they declared: "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." « « » »

MY RETREAT OF FAITH

My annual pilgrimage to Lake McCloud in the heart of the Sierras is more than a revisit to a well loved place. Each year I carry home with me a fresh picture of my retreat where I may renew my faith and acquaintanceship with the Divine Presence. Climbing the steep grade to the summit helps me relive the challenge that life provides each day here in the city.

As difficult as the climbing is, however, and as per-

plexing as my daily problems are, the promise of the calm waters of the lake inspires me onward. The tremendous peace that pervades this atmosphere I carry away with me each year, and when the burdens of our jet-paced age become almost too heavy to bear, I take a moment and meditate on the beauty and quiet, God-filled majesty of this mountain place. It is the promise of this tranquillity in which I may think clearly and constructively that enables me to return mentally, and even physically, restored and strengthened.

It is wonderful how the wisdom of God speaks to us from these surroundings. Here we see grandeur, and the struggle of nature's titanic forces resolving into the everlasting calm of a wise creator. Surely we go through no greater struggle in our own daily life than these trees and mountains. Are we, too, not equipped with a knowledge and faith to meet our storms and seasons with equal fortitude, as do the majestic trees that rim this beautiful lake? I often think of how the Master of Galilee used to refresh himself beside the sparkling waters of his own retreat.

We are not always able to slip away to some nearby resort, but we can mentally journey to some place in memory where we experienced the presence of God, and we can fill ourselves with the strength and courage that such a knowledge of God's presence brings.

I have tried to express poetically what this retreat means to me in the hope that someone else may be moved to seek a similar retreat of Faith.

High Sierra

The jewelled sapphire lakes hold cameos
Of ivory clouds. The mountain's challenge grows
Till I must climb the heights and touch the sky,
Where only eagles with their swift wings fly.
The timeless patience of the centuries
Is carved upon the faces of the sentinel trees
That guard the threshold of this high retreat,
Where man can find an inner peace that is complete.
Here moves the ever-changing mystic mood
Of God in His creative magnitude.

— Zelma S. Dennis.

LIGHT ON LIFE'S CHANGES

By W. J. Thompson, D.D.

Among the messages that reach me one question comes at regular intervals: "Why do I have such contradictory feelings? I want to be sincere, but I find there are times when, because of the opposite reactions, I am a problem to myself. Sometimes I wonder if I am different from other people. There are times when I am in the mood for prayers, and other periods when it means little to me. Sometimes I am filled with genuine interest in religion, and God is real to me. At other times I lack interest in spiritual things, and God seems vague and unreal. What is the matter with me? Am I shallow and lacking in principle, or is there an explanation of these changes in my feelings toward these matters?"

In reply, I wish to emphasize that this is not an unusual situation. In fact it represents a problem so general that I am using this inquiry to write something which may prove helpful to others.

In many lives there are feelings and experiences so contradictory that they are a source of perplexity and distress. To such men and women I commend the divine message found in Isaiah 48, verse 18: "O that thou hadst hearkened unto my commandments! Then had thy righteousness been as the waves of the sea." Please note specially the words, "Righteousness...as the waves of the sea." They are amazing words. Our conception of righteousness is of something that continues perfectly steady, without any change. Because of this mistaken concept, thousands of men and women are bewildered and confused as they contemplate their personal "reactions" to religion.

Let me repeat these remarkable words from Isaiah: "Righteousness...as the waves of the sea." The very words represent a picture of motion. And it is important to remember that. "Nowhere in all this universe is motion a steady and continuous thing." says one writer. "Motion which seems to be steady is, as a matter of fact, pulsating and rhythmic." Watch the wind as it travels over the wheat fields, and notice that motion is rhythmic. Rays of light and heat and ether do not travel in steady motion, but in waves, that differ in length. In the heavens we note the periodic movement of the spheres, and on the seashore

we observe the action of the tides. Everywhere we learn that motion is intermittent, involving action and rest, advance and recoil, ebb and flow—the rhythm of motion.

"Righteousness as the waves of the sea." In that inspired sentence we find that all things are subject to the law of the tides. The sea has its tides. The periodic rising and falling, the advancement and retirement of the sea twice in 24 hours, is a picture of what happens to us as human beings. Our physical bodies are subject to this tidal law. They are not capable of continuous uninterrupted action. The law of the body is action and inaction, work and rest, performance and repose. Once every 24 hours our physical forces are at their highest (about 4 P.M.) and once each 24 hours at their lowest (around 4 A.M.).

On the mental side, also, we discover this law of the tides. Mind is even more intermittent in its action than the body. Individuals vary greatly in matters of intellect, but it remains a fact that each person has a mental ebb and flow. "Every now and then," one writer states, "you become discouraged because occasionally you meet disappointments and difficulties, and even pass through dreadful periods when 'everything goes wrong.'"

Some think a healthy life should be even, steady, smoothly progressive. But normal life always reveals ebb and flow. No healthy life ever moves evenly. Always, times of activity alternate with times of lassitude; times when everything looks bright and times when everything is far from bright. We would all live much happier, more colorful, and powerful lives if we would accept the fundamental fact of life's unevenness.

"Righteousness as the waves of the sea." According to the Word of God, the law of the tides is found also in the realm of spiritual things. The soul has its ebb and flow no less than the sea. Yesterday there was a vivid sense of God's presence. You felt the reality of your Divine Companion, and the feeling brought new strength within you. Today you seem to have lost the sense of God's nearness. You wonder if your religion is leaving you, or if God is deserting you. The truth is, God is there—just the same. God is with you whether your tide seems to be at ebb or flow. He has promised to be with you always.

Remember you are not alone in this change of moods. Many of the finest souls in history

are with you. Think of Moses, talking face to face with God, so that his face shone; and, immediately afterwards, breaking the tablets of stone in his discouragement. Think of Elijah, standing before Ahab in the power and freedom of a soul lifted high in the presence of the eternal, and, the next day, lying abject beneath the juniper tree, praying for death.

Think of Martin Luther, John Wesley, Phillips Brooks, and many other great spiritual leaders who set men's souls aglow—yet each of them had times of depression.

But the Christ of God is with you always. Amid the everchanging waves of circumstance, there is serenity and security in the unchanging God, revealed in Jesus Christ. Your life is like the sea, with its dramatic changes from calm to storm and with its constant movements and its ebb and flow of tides. But life is far more than the ebb and flow of tides. It is the revelation and companionship of the One who controls the tides and holds the sea within His hand.

"Righteousness as the waves of the sea." May these words give us new light on life's changes. Above all, may the divine figure of the Saviour come walking on the waves, calling to us: "Be of good cheer. It is I. Be not afraid."

INHERITED GOODNESS

By Rev. G. Roy Bragg

Those of us associated with the Christian church cannot help being disturbed when we hear of good people who are not interested in religion. It is almost two thousand years since Jesus inaugurated His program, yet there are still many who are willing to bask in the sunshine of a Christian culture without contributing anything toward its continuance, or even acknowledging their debt to it.

If you make inquiries with regard to such an attitude, you get many and varied answers. One man stated that he was not associated with organized religion because he preferred to give his support to institutions which did more

good for the world. But when asked if he knew anything of the comparative services of the church and other institutions, he looked rather hurt and regarded the question as impertinent. He had not the vaguest notion of such a comparison and had not taken the trouble to find out before declaring his allegiance. Others have suggested that they do not believe in the things for which the church stands. But once again you can cause embarrassment by the question, "What are the things for which the church stands?"

There is another interesting group which is very frank and proud of itself. They will tell you, "No, I do not belong to the church, but I am just as good as some and better than others who do." It is this apparently harmless attitude that we must be concerned about, for it is representative of a philosophy which can gnaw at the very basis of the highest values of life and encourage the kind of society which even the good people without religion would not want.

What shall we say about these people who are 'just as good as some and better than others' who are associated with the church?

First of all, I think we had better admit that they may be right. There are good moral people who are not too interested in religion. Everyone, at some time or another has met the business man who is honest and fair in all his dealings. He is a man of integrity in many respects, but he does not belong to a church and seldom or never attends. Yet, as some of his customers testify, you would travel far to find a better man. And most of us have in our congregations the good lady who is always cataloguing the virtues of her husband, yet invariably ends on the apologetic note, "I know he does not go to church, but I could not find a better husband."

Unfortunately we must make another admission too: not only are there good moral people who do not belong to the church, but there are some unprincipled ones who do—and are even regular in attendance.

We must be sincere and face the facts. We Christians have not always been the people we should have been. Our prayer of confession is so significant and necessary: "We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep... We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done."

But having made such admissions, there is another

side to the story. Let it be said with emphasis that we, as Christians, are not in the church because we are better than others outside, but because we know we are not as good as we ought to be and we are anxious to be better. With all our imperfections, we believe we are much better being associated with the church than we otherwise would be. And that goes for the good business man and the good husband. As good as they are, they could and would improve by an active association with the program of Christ in the form of His church.

I am not unaware of all the criticism hurled at particular church members. Old Mr. So-and-So is described in derogative terms and "he is a church member." and Mrs. So-and-So has a poisonous tongue " and she is a regular attendant." Perhaps so. But think of how much worse they could be, and probably would be, without the restraining influence of their religious associations. Furthermore, the suggestion of Edmund Burke with regard to a nation should be remembered in connection with the evaluation of the church: "You cannot indict a whole nation," he said, " because of the actions of one or a few of its citizens."

But there is something more to be said about a morality that seems to exist apart from religion. Where did it come from and where did it get its sanctions? As Christian churchmen, the ultimate basis of our morality is our religion. The good life is achieved through response to God's will. But what about good men who are not religious? Where do they get their code of honor, their noble character? The answer to that is that their goodness is inherited.

Huxley, the philosopher, is described as a man of noble character and yet an agnostic. His life does not seem to bear out our thesis very well, until you discover that he was the recipient of a rich religious heritage. Georgé Eliot was not a church woman by any manner or means, and yet her portrayal of great principles has seldom been equalled. The explanation is that she came from an outstanding Christian home. On one occasion she referred to God, Immortality and Duty. God was unbelievable; Immortality impossible; but Duty was the great human imperative. George Eliot was like a great many other people. She was trying to maintain the advantages of a Christian culture, but at the same time she was hacking away at the foundations which supported it. When you cut a rose from the bush,

it still retains its fragrance. People who try to separate themselves from their religious heritage invariably betray the source from which they have come.

But building life and society on inherited religion is a pretty dangerous process. It is true that a rose separated from its root still retains its fragrance but not indefinitely, and unless someone is concerned about the maintenance of the root there will soon be no roses. The same is true of morality and religion. Religion is the root out of which blooms morality. Or to change the figure, some people live on the interest of capital investment. If our capital is sufficient, we may draw on it in an emergency. But every time we draw on our capital we reduce our income, and if we continue long enough bankruptcy will be the result. The same is true in the realm of morals and religion. It is an easy matter to become spiritually bankrupt, especially if we insist upon building a good life or a good society without being religious.

A glaring example of what can happen when someone insists upon this experiment on a national scale was demonstrated in Hitler's Germany. An intelligent, industrious, refined and kindly people in one generation, minus the religious sanctions and standards of their forefathers, degenerated into a state of barbarianism where unthinkable atrocities were practiced on human beings with less consideration than scientists have for guinea pigs.

We must be on our guard against any philosophy which seeks to produce morality without religious and spiritual foundations. When dictators wish to dominate a people, they first of all attempt to destroy religion. A Communism which dismisses religion as a product of fear or a means of escape, and endeavors to build up standards and values merely out of political and economic shiftings, is a sure and rapid transit in the direction of annihilation of the best things in life which even the communist would not want destroyed. The building of our own nation was no accident or a matter of fate. The United States of America has become what it is because founding it, cultivating it and leading it have always been men and women whose one sovereign and ultimate authority was Almighty God. If we ever switch from that emphasis we will be inviting the disaster which has befallen all other civilizations that have tried to be good without being religious.

THOS. CARLYLE

From his HEROES AND HERO

"One current hypothesis about Mohammed, that he was a scheming imposter, a Falsehood incarnate, that his religion is a mere mass of quackery and fatuity, begins really to be now untenable to anyone. The lies, which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man, are disgraceful to ourselves only...The word this man spoke has been the life-guidance now of a hundred and eighty millions* of men these twelve hundred years...Are we to suppose that it was a miserable piece of spiritual legerdemain, this which so many creatures of the Almighty have lived by and died by? I, for my part, cannot form any such supposition. I will believe most things sooner than that...

"This deep-hearted Son of the Wilderness, with his beaming black eyes and open social deep soul, had other thoughts in him than ambition. A silent great soul; he was one of those who cannot but be in earnest; whom Nature herself has appointed to be sincere. While others walk in formulas and hearsays, contented enough to dwell there, this man could not screen himself in formulas; he was alone with his own soul and the reality of things. The great mystery of Existence glared-in upon him, with its terrors, with its splendors; no hearsays could hide that unspeakable fact, 'Here am I!'... From of old, a thousand thoughts, in his pilgrimings and wanderings, had been in this man: What am I? What is this unfathomable Thing I live in, which men name Universe? What is Life; what is Death? What am I to believe? What am I to do?... The stern sandy solitudes answered not. The great Heaven rolling silent overhead, with its blue-glancing stars answered not. There was no answer. The man's own soul, and what of God's inspiration dwelt there, had to answer!...

"Mohammed was in his fortieth year when, having withdrawn to a cavern in Mt. Hara...to pass the month in prayer, and meditation on these great questions, he one day told his wife...that by the unspeakable special favor of Heaven he had now found it all out; was in doubt and darkness no longer, but saw it all. That all these Idols and Formulas were nothing, miserable bits of wood; that there was One God in and over all; and we must leave all Idols, and look to Him. That God is great; and that there is nothing else great! He is

**Carlyle was writing in 1840. The figure is close to 400 million now.*

ON MOHAMMED

-WORSHIP: *The Hero As Prophet*

the Reality. Wooden Idols are not real; He is real. He made us at first, sustains us yet; and we and all things are but the shadow of Him; a transitory garment veiling the Eternal Splendor. *'Allah akbar*, God is great'; —and then also *'Islam'*, That we must submit to God. That our whole strength lies in resigned submission to Him, whatsoever He do to us. For this world, and for the other! The thing He sends to us, were it death and worse than death, shall be good, shall be best...

"Miracles? cries he: What miracle would you have? Are not you yourselves there? God made you, 'shaped you out of a little clay'. Ye were small once; a few years ago ye were not at all. Ye have beauty, strength, thoughts, 'ye have compassion on one another'...This struck me much: Allah might have made you having no compassion on one another,—how had it been then! This is a great direct thought, a glance at first-hand into the very fact of things...

"They record with just pride that he would mend his own shoes, patch his own cloak. A poor. hard-toiling, ill-provided man; careless of what vulgar men toil for...something better in him than hunger of any sort,—or these wild Arab men, fighting and jostling three-and-twenty years at his hand, in close contact with him always, would not have reverenced him so!... They called him Prophet, you say? Why, he stood there face to face with them; bare, not enshrined in any mystery, visibly clouting his own cloak, cobbling his own shoes; fighting, counseling, ordering in the midst of them; they must have seen what kind of a man he was, let him be called what you like! No emperor with his tiaras was obeyed as this man in a cloak of his own clouting...

"To the Arab Nation it (Islam) was as a birth from darkness into light...A poor shepherd people, roaming unnoticed in its desert since the creation of the world: a Hero-prophet was sent down to them with a world they could believe: see, the unnoticed becomes world-notable, the small has grown world-great; within one century afterward, Arabia is at Granada on this hand, at Delhi on that...Belief is great, life-giving...I said, the Great Man was always as lightning out of Heaven; the rest of men waited for him like fuel, and then they too would flame." «»»

THE ART OF PRAYER:
THREE CREATIVE TECHNIQUES

By Dr. Raymond F. Piper

Many kinds of prayer exist because they satisfy various aims or needs of men, such as praise and thanksgiving, intercession and petition, joyous communion, problem solving, etc. This essay is devoted to the problem-solving type of prayer. It is an endeavor to characterize three techniques which favor success in solving the baffling problems of life.

I call these methods respectively: intellectual-intuitive, social interaction, and aesthetic contemplation. The goal in each case is to attain a rate or adjustment of mental vibration by which we can receive spiritual illumination and power from the invisible world. Each kind of prayer requires a suitable background, setting, or situation which will create a mood somehow akin to mystic experience.

THE INTELLECTUAL-INTUITIVE technique is of primary importance, is the key to effective prayer, and develops through four stages.

1. *Clarification or formulation of one's problem.* One does his best to solve his problem by careful thinking, but ends without a solution. Then he states his question as clearly as possible.

2. *Resignation and projection.* In this kind of prayer the desire or need for help is intense and important in one's life. Yet after stage one I admit failure in reaching a solution by any known rational methods. Then I project or launch my wish into the cosmic, Godward, with the ardent longing for an answer.

3. *Waiting and cooperation.* Then comes the important and difficult period of waiting for an answer. Prayers frequently fail because this stage of silence and alert waiting has not been provided. For many the most serious hindrance is talking too much. This stage requires detachment from all disturbing influences; gaining a condition of untouchability. A principal function of yogic exercise is to gain complete insulation from sensuous or mental distractions.

At the same time one must often carry on certain activities which are not distracting and which might aid in the discovery of the solution, indeed be necessary. One might

walk in the garden or the country, listen to tranquil music, or lie down, perhaps sleep.

4. *Awakening and revelation.* When successful the last stage consists of the intuitive, sudden presentation, or solution, or discovery of the answer.

Many of my best ideas flood in about three o' clock in the morning, after I have formulated my problem before going to sleep. But when the insights come, I must get up and write them out quickly or they may be lost. An engineering friend regularly formulates at bed time any unsolved problems he has, and in the morning he can usually write out their solutions quickly on the pad he keeps near his bed.

SOCIAL INTERACTION OR THE ART OF CONFERENCE. Jesus said, "When two or three are gathered together in my name, I am in their midst." A social psychologist has proved that students do mathematical problems faster and more accurately if they work in a room with other students even though there is no spoken communication. The Quakers use group silence and meditation to gain creative insights.

Several mental conditions must be observed. There needs to be a felt atmosphere of common purpose, devotion, and loving kindness, without contentiousness or self-display. The Baha'i teacher, Abdu'l-Baha, once remarked that when two people argue both are wrong: wrong because they have not first established the conditions of good will and of united search for truth which creative social interchange requires. A loving spirit is a fundamental necessity.

Jesus used this method in his numerous meetings with his disciples. At the last supper he created the historically important ritual of the Eucharist, but at Gethsemane, when he most needed the companionship and the support of his disciples, they relaxed into uncreative sleep. At Pentecost the common enthusiasm and longing were conditions which brought remarkable understanding and unity of spirit.

In a graduate seminar on the problem of salvation in Harvard Divinity School, Dean William W. Fenn suggested that I investigate the question of what is the distinctive mark of the Christian conception of salvation. I could not report on all of the fifteen or more theories, and my result was unsatisfactory to him. He kept the class in suspense for two hours before he told us his answer to the question. After he revealed it to us, I for one did not believe it—at least for two years. Now

I believe it is true. He said, "The key to Christian salvation is friendship, true, loving, sympathetic friendship." Was that not the way Jesus' disciples found the way to God and to a joyful life?

AESTHETIC CONTEMPLATION. Space forbids the expansion of this technique. It assumes the reality of the profound kinship between aesthetic and religious experience. The basic reason for this kinship is that God is a lover and creator of beauty and made man in His image. Hence, growth in the appreciation of beauties in nature and the arts is one of the important highways of ascent to God. Otto Klineberg, in his book on SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, locates the "aesthetic drives" in the first or most dependable class of human instincts, along with hunger, thirst, and the need for sleep. In other words, you can count on every normal person you meet on getting hungry for food and for beauty.

The point of this technique is that one can train himself to prepare for divine illumination by developing genuine aesthetic contemplation, of a variety of beautiful objects: poetry, music, natural grandeur, a beautiful building and so forth. Surely the spreading fields of lilies and daisies on the hillsides of Galilee often provided Jesus with favorable conditions for communion with his Father, for thinking about and solving his problems.

The three techniques outlined above have several common features. All of them begin with a feeling, vague or vivid, of a basic need in one's soul. Then one retires or withdraws into some kind of quietness, silence, or retreat, to wait for God's answer. There is always a background which begets emotions akin or favorable to the intuition desired, which emotions serve as launching platforms for the mind. In the first it is the emotion of intellectual love, the desire for truth; in the second it is human good will, sympathetic communion with persons; and in the third, it is aesthetic delight or the experience of the beautiful. In the Bhagavad-Gita there is a fourth way, of action, in which the doing of one's daily duties may bring the rewards of understanding and joy.

Thus there are many paths to God. The one adopted may vary with one's problem and according to his temperament, but Jesus promised that everyone that knocks shall find.

ALTRUISM OR EGOISM: HEAVEN OR HELL

Altruism is that quality by virtue of which man loses himself completely in the service of others and finds himself reborn in a new and better life.

Altruism is the motivating principle of a sublime life; egoism is the motivating force of an ignoble life.

Altruism is the essence of brotherhood and the only way to the redemption of man and the salvation of the world; egoism is the mother of hatred, and hatred is the cause of war and of world destruction.

He who has triumphed over self, through serving God, has gained victory over death and enters into the effulgence of the heaven world; he who remains a slave to self, through serving mammon, dwells in the depths of darkness and despair and is spiritually dead.

It is only through renunciation—complete surrender of himself to God—that man is resurrected from the dead and ascends into the glorious fulness of a life centered on God.

The Master admonished us, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Serving God is harmony and harmony is heaven; serving mammon is inharmony and inharmony is hell. Heaven and hell are right here upon this earth and they are man-created.

May we all live in harmony with God's plan by serving Him, in loving obedience to His Laws; in all our ways, glorifying Him. For to glorify God is the fulfillment of the Law and the fulfillment of the Law is Eternal Life.

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Whatsoever man experiences, is the result of this choice.

— Harry Halsey Starrett.

THE MOST HOLY PLACE OF PRAYER

By Rev. Roy Wallace Thomas

The Bible gives a careful picture of an ideal portable sanctuary called the tabernacle, which was a dwelling in which God could meet his people. Behind this conception was the religious ideal of Ezekiel (37:27): "My dwelling shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Yet it was thought that God was so high and holy that he could be approached only in a certain way by certain men. The three parts of the tabernacle—court, holy place and holy of holies—symbolized the way to the Presence. Each part marked an ascending degree of sanctity. In the outer court the people, including the Gentiles, could worship. Only the priests could enter the holy place. Once a year only might the high priest enter the holy of holies, bearing the blood of atonement, for in that sanctuary God dwelt "in ineffable majesty and almost unapproachable holiness."

In simple prayer, there are three stages that correspond in their degrees of effectiveness to the three parts of the ancient tabernacle.

(1) We enter the court of prayer when we are conscious of our need and remember that only God can supply our inmost needs.

(2) We enter the holy place of prayer by cultivating "sincere desire," but if we stop with desires and wishes we fail and never reach power. To do nothing but nurture wishful desire is like riding a hobby-horse. We are in motion but we never arrive.

(3) The most holy place of prayer is the human will. Thus the holiest place of prayer is not a place at all, for it is the vital, throbbing, dynamic center of the person. In the highest concept of sacredness, the holy of holies is the human heart. As to locality, the most holy place of prayer is any situation where one is conscious that his commitment or surrender is complete.

At the center of the self a man is alone except for God. In this holy of holies a man must do his own praying. We may pray for one another, it is true. But the access to the most holy place is direct and immediate. Every man must enter into the Presence himself, led by the spirit of God. The cost is complete self-giving. "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for

me with all your heart." (Jer. 29:13) In this self-surrender, more is received than is given. We give ourselves; we find God. Our life is given that Power may energize it and create more life.

In this self-giving through prayer, the lips may be involved, but not always. "Be still and know that I am God." The surrender itself cannot be made by the lips, nor accomplished merely by thinking. It is an act of life. Created in the likeness of God, in the very beginning of our existence God gives us something of himself. We are to use that strength, as we grow, for more strength. We are not "worms of the dust," as I heard misguided people say in the old-time prayer meetings. "Oh to be nothing, nothing," some of them would sing—and they succeeded all too well! We were not created ever to be nothing.

Beginning our careers as helpless infants, with our bit of divinity potential in us, fated to grow up through the painful stages of immaturity, our destiny on this planet is to grow into completed, full-grown, mature children of God so that we may heed the admonition, "Quit you like men." The work of the world as God has planned it can be accomplished only by mature human beings.

But few of us really achieve full maturity. Too often the seemingly mature individual, off guard, betrays immature or childish traits. One famed psychologist recently stated that one-half of the people of our nation are arrested eight-year-olds emotionally. I do not think the situation is that bad. But it is a fact that the immature part of our natures loves immaturity in prayer. We love to tarry in the outer court with our needs, and in the holy place indulging in wishing. We find it difficult to move into the holy of holies where only the mature man can enter, because the requirement is perfect surrender to God. It is hard in this world to be a man after the pattern of the manhood of the Master. Jesus entered the most holy place of prayer in Gethsemane when he prayed, "Not my will but thine be done." Mature prayer is response to God from the inmost heart, from the will.

The hope of the world depends upon the inmost response of men to God which makes them at one with his will. In the words of one of the finest religious thinkers of our day, "*The will of God is love.*" Obedience to the commandments of love is the main test of maturity. »»»»

Book Review

FIRST QUESTIONS ON THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, by Thomas E. Powers; Harper, 49 East 33rd Street, NYC, 1959, 241 pp; $4.00.

The Harper publishing house has enriched the lives of thousands of people with outstanding religious works by modern writers, as well as frequent publication of spiritual masterpieces of past ages. One of their finest achievements in recent years is FIRST QUESTIONS ON THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, by Thomas E. Powers, a new and highly original, as well as dynamic writer, destined in our opinion to leave a vital impress on the religious literature of our time.

We strongly urge every seeker of truth, every serious student and practitioner of the spiritual life, to read it at any cost. It will disturb, inspire, startle, cleanse and amaze him. If he reads it with the attention and open-mindedness it requires it will profoundly affect his life and, as few books are capable of, make him a different person than he was before he opened it.

This book is definitely not for people who take their religion in stride, along with their other affairs, people who believe religion "should have its place"; nor for those who think salvation is something they will attain to by the mere act of dying; nor those who believe that Christ did most of the work for them in the long and arduous road that leads to divine illumination and direct experience of Truth; nor those who say that they "wouldn't want to be perfect anyway." This book will frighten and depress such people and they will do well to leave it alone.

It is a passionate and challenging call to arms, a clarion cry sounded against the ignorance and perversity, the sluggishness and evil, of our ordinary unregenerate natures; and it is a man of spiritual knowledge, born of the insight of spiritual experience, who makes this call. One never doubts this from the first page, and it is this which gives the book an astonishing credibility and persuasive power.

Even his style of writing is a constant surprise and exhilaration. It is an extraordinary mixture of elegance and literary grace interwoven with a colloquial, often salty and robust vocabulary, and yet somehow this combination does not become, as it well might, grotesque and preten-

tious. It seems to be a natural, integral expression of the author's own personality.

Spiritual life has little in common with ordinary life; as one proceeds it comes to have less and less in common; until, at the end, the illumined person only seems to be a man like other men. In reality divine enlightenment has transformed him, and though he still moves about in a body and uses the words other people do, he is quite literally dead to the world as the rest of us perceive it. He lives at all times in God, and all knowledge is his, all love and all power and all virtue. This is the condition and destiny to which every one of us is called and which, as Mr. Powers repeatedly reminds us, none of us can avoid. Sooner or later we must come to it.

This way of life is exciting beyond compare — as it should be, for it involves the high and unique drama of the soul struggling to realize its own divinity. And a description of such a life should suggest and project that excitement, which Mr. Powers does superlatively.

Most religious writers give us their reflections in a tentative style, concealing their own experiences and personalities behind a mask of doctrinal allusions and timid, stereotyped generalizations. So many read as if the authors consulted contemporary viewpoints and acceptable styles before writing. So many disappoint because little of the tremendous and awesome drama taking place in the spiritual life comes across to us. So many merely strengthen us in our laziness and slumber, and our desire to be "practical" about the role of religion in our lives. FIRST QUESTIONS ON THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT towers over the vast majority of such works from this standpoint alone—though there are many others.

Are there no flaws or shortcomings in it? There are a few. But this is so remarkable and valuable a work that one willingly waives the right to criticize its occasional lapses for fear a single reader will be led to miss the experience of reading it.

On the following page a few passages of Mr. Powers' own writing are cited, so that the reader may have a chance to judge for himself.

In summary: a brilliant and powerful book which should become a modern classic of its kind; written by a man who walks into religious literature in full stature, poised and eloquent, already in the first rank of those who speak to us of God.

From Thomas E. Powers' FIRST QUESTIONS IN THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

"...While reading the questions that came in, I felt one over-all concern running through the lot:... 'Is spiritual *experience* possible for me?' It seemed that many of these questioners were dissatisfied with theory and speculation and wanted to know if something perhaps could really *happen* to them vis-a-vis God and the great Unknown. This is literally to 'ask for a miracle' — that is, for the incursion of the Suprapersonal into the personal life and the Supratemporal into time. The question is, *can the miracle happen*—not just to saints but to quite ordinary people? Granted the eyes are blind: can they be opened?..."

"...We can hardly expect to seize the reins of divine power and go off on various kinds of health, wealth, and success drives in the first few years of our apprenticeship. There is a vogue for this sort of thing today, but it never gets anywhere over any period of time, because the Law is stern enough and tender enough to forbid it before it has gone very far. God is no doubt even more loving and kind and provident than anybody ever said He was. But at the same time, most fortunately for us, He is not a big boob whose leg we can pull for favors or whose pocket we can pick for material or spiritual perquisites..."

"...Reason, in the quest of God, is not an ass upon which we can ride and prance as in merely utilitarian pursuits. It is a lion on the path that must be faced. It is a sphinx whose questions we must answer, or go down to spiritual death. Reason is not a luxury with which we may or may not dispense; it is a necessity with which we must deal. If the questions of reason are not answered and the legitimate demands of reason are not met, reason will never stand still..."

"...The aim of every great religion is direct experience of the Divine...Everyone, therefore, is encouraged to press forward--as humbly and prudently as you please but at the same time ardently and with high hope—toward the great realms of direct spiritual experience...That light is not far removed from ordinary men. Spatially it is not removed at all. We, unknowing, are immersed in it continually... Only a film of hypnotic ignorance prevents our seeing, feeling, *knowing* the Light for what it is. *And the film can be removed...*"

Book Review

HOW TO LIVE IN THE CIRCLE OF PRAYER, by Stella Terrill Mann; Dodd Mead, New York, 1959, 180 pp; $3.00.

In the quest for spiritual realization there must be, in this life or in worlds beyond, hundreds of stages of growth that each of us must pass through before perfection and enlightenment are reached. (One tempting reason for considering reincarnation plausible is that all of us are so different in our evolution and that few of us, in this one life, come close to the spiritual development we would like to achieve and which we know certain individuals have achieved.) At any rate, one stage that most searching people experience is when we discover that prayer, fervently made and faithfully believed in, can bring into our lives all of the good things the world has to offer; when we unashamedly pray for the fulfillment of our desires and for *things* to come to us—and find that these things do indeed come to us.

Your reviewer believes, with the editorial in this issue, that ideally prayer should be an end in itself and, like purity and compassion, its own reward, and not a means to gaining anything for us as earthly creatures. But there is no doubt that great numbers of people feel otherwise and believe that prayer should be made for the satisfaction of legitimate desires that all of us have known at one time or other. It is to these people that Stella Terrill Mann addresses herself, with uninhibited candor, in her newest book, HOW TO LIVE IN THE CIRCLE OF PRAYER.

Apart from the reservations noted, we recommend this book to anyone who shares her philosophy. It is written in a rapid, informal and sprightly fashion, and because of its very simplicity and unpretentiousness should prove even more popular than Mrs. Mann's previous books on similar themes, all of which have been of known service to spiritual seekers who agree with her religious philosophy.

The book is filled with inspirational stories of people Mrs. Mann has known or taught in a long and varied career. They are stories of turning points, or irrevocable decisions made, of dreams nursed and pursued, of stunted lives redeemed by the power of hope and faith. And they all have the intangible but convincing air of truth about them. «»»»

NOTICES and COMMENTS

LOOKING AHEAD. In June 1950, after six months of unofficial existence, Fellowship in Prayer was formally incorporated. The June 1960 issue, therefore, one year from now, will be our special 10th Anniversary number. We are already looking ahead that far because we expect that issue to be the biggest and best we have ever produced, something which we hope will measure up to the expectations of all our readers, writers, field supporters, and trustees. It is very likely that before then we will have succeeded in having the magazine printed, a step forward that is now being urged on us from several quarters. In any case the June 1960 issue will definitely be printed and will contain a great many additional pages, together with illustrations and photographs. We will have occasion to refer to it again, but for the present we would like to ask those readers, particularly, who were with us during the 1950-55 period, to keep it in mind. Specifically we hope that anyone who personally knew the founder of Fellowship in Prayer, Carl A. Evans, to send us in good time their recollections of him, for inclusion in the Anniversary number.

CONTRIBUTORS. We welcome the return to our pages of Rev. G. Roy Bragg of New York. His forthright, provocative remarks on "Inherited Goodness" will sound chords familiar to most of us. What distinguished his treatment of this subject, surely an important one in our day, was, we felt, his humility and at the same time his frankness. With this second article printed this year, Rev. Bragg has established himself as a valuable contributor on whom we may count regularly in the future... Dr. W. J. Thompson's article on "Light on Life's Changes," if read with due reflection and self-analysis, will be seen to have great relevance to many of our problems, particularly those arising out of spiritual struggle. What is really involved in spiritual life is so marvelous and mysterious that, by logic alone, it is inevitable that at times we will grow depressed, uncertain and even discouraged. Dr. Thompson's sane advice should help the thoughtful reader not to be overly confused or sidetracked by negative periods that none of us can avoid... Appearing in our pages for the first time is Dr. Raymond F. Piper, with his lucidly written "The Art of Prayer." Dr.

Piper is Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus, at Syracuse University. He tells us that a heavy schedule of writing and reading in his specialty, Cosmic Art, in which field he is a world authority, makes it doubtful that he can write for us very often. But we earnestly hope that at least once more this year we will be able to present his work. We are grateful to Mr. Gordon Belding, one of our West Coast Advisors, who was responsible for inviting Dr. Piper to send us his article. Mr. Belding writes that "Dr. Piper is known for his constructive efforts in bringing to a focus the more recent developments in spiritual or 'Cosmic' art. In this capacity he has served as a rallying point for artists and as a disseminating center to the public."...The centerfold of this number is our contribution to the cause of understanding among world religions. As is obvious from the selections printed, Thomas Carlyle was battling against the anti-foreign provincialism of his age, the tendency to belittle alien faiths that was so prevalent in the 19th century. (There is also the strong probability that he was attempting to purge himself of this same virus of disparagement of the non-Christian world. If so, one can only applaud his courage and honesty.) Perhaps his impassioned words will help us to diminish in ourselves similar separatist attitudes. Let us make peace, and be at peace, with everything we have disparaged or condemned in our own lives. The scriptures of all ages, and our own consciences, and the bitter plight of our world today, command us to do so...In our last issue we printed an excerpt from a sermon preached by Rev. Samuel H. Miller of Cambridge, Mass., "Gethsemane and Faith." It has been brought to our attention that he has recently been named dean of the Harvard Divinity School. We extend our congratulations to Rev. Miller...We want to thank all who sent in manuscripts and ideas for this issue, and particularly our contributing writers whose steady support and cooperation are a continual source of gratification.

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The Golden Age

It seems quite fitting that we of sunset years
Should be considered in the Golden Age,
And as our book of life is still unfinished,
We welcome omens of a brighter page.

We have more time for rest and recollection,
Letting the gladness of a busy past
Reflect its light upon the present shadows,
Keeping alive fond memories that last.

So may the record of these years have beauty,
So may we mould each word more prayerfully,
Perform each deed with greater thoughtfulness,
Leaving to Heaven's grace...what is to be.

— Anna M. Carroll.

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